

# Wormwise

Funded by Beef + Lamb New Zealand

30 January 2025

Hon Dr. Shane Reti  
Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

Dear Minister Reti,

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology. Science plays a vital role in supporting New Zealand's agricultural sector. We look forward to it being better supported under the changes to the Crown Research Institutes announced last week.

In the meantime, we are writing to highlight an urgent issue: the loss of critical mass in parasitology research in New Zealand. This is an area that needs immediate attention to safeguard farm productivity, animal welfare, and the broader economic contributions of our rural sector.

## **Our Concerns**

New Zealand's research capability in livestock parasite management has been in decline for more than a decade. This is set to be further diminished with the impending redundancies of three of AgResearch's most experienced and internationally recognised parasitologists.

Prior to this period of decline, active parasitology research groups at AgResearch Grasslands, Massey University and Lincoln University provided regular and critical research output. This research helped inform many of our world-leading principles in managing parasites in livestock and slowing the development of parasites resistant to the treatments used by farmers.

Unfortunately, we are now in an era where parasite resistance to routine treatments is threatening the viability of some farming systems, affecting animal welfare and hampering efforts to improve greenhouse gas emissions on-farm.

These issues pose a significant risk to farm businesses, potentially increasing their vulnerability and leading to reduced production, job losses, and wider downstream economic impacts. Additionally, poor animal welfare outcomes could damage relationships with our international consumers. Changes in weather and climate are increasing the threat from parasites such as liver fluke, ticks, the blood-sucking 'Barbers Pole Worm' in sheep and lungworm in cattle. There will soon no longer be any fully effective controls for blowfly strike in livestock; biocontrol and other integrated management solutions are urgently required.

There remains an enormous amount of research work to be done to help address these and other parasite-related issues, and New Zealand needs its parasitology capability more than ever.

Years of underfunding in long-term agricultural science and a competitive funding model have contributed to the current situation. In a country of New Zealand's size, science teams should collaborate, not compete. The lack of sustained funding and collaborative incentives has made succession planning nearly impossible in disciplines like parasitology. We are at a critical turning point for parasite research in New Zealand and we ask that urgent consideration be given to a better way forward to support this important area of research.

### Looking ahead

A meeting of parasitology stakeholders is being organised to explore what a collaborative approach to parasite research, including funding, could look like. With a reimagined approach, parasitology research could become a genuine example of 'where talent wants to live', but we will need help from government, and we ask for your support. We will let you know when the detail of this meeting are finalised.

Signed



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Wormwise




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Chair, Wormwise Trust  
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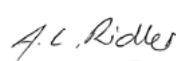

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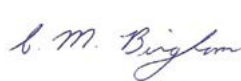
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